

most fortunately. It has won few triumphs for posterity to lament. Sidney failed to strangle the Elizabethan drama in its cradle; though the pedants got the better of Corneille. Similarly, the Romantics outlive the half-forgotten judges who condemned them to death. And among the Romantics in their turn, what better, or worse, example could be found of the futility of trying to subject practice in literature to theory, than Wordsworth's famous preface about Poetic Diction, with its singularly muddled arguments which were proved bad by Coleridge with arguments not much less muddled, in a case where no arguments could ever have been good? Who can argue a man into liking milk-pudding? And who, once more, can read now without a sense of hopeless weariness Arnold's exhortations to poets to employ ancient subjects and the grand style, to be highly serious and to criticise life?

So with all the threadbare controversies about Artistic 'Imitation' and the Unities, about Classicism and Romanticism, about Art and Morality—they have dragged on, like the old wars of religion, to no end except exhaustion, tolerance, and *laissez-faire*. All critical laws and verdicts, watchwords and catchwords, formulas and precepts reduce themselves at last, in Moliere's wise phrase, to 'quelques observations aisles que le bon sens a faites sur ce qui *peut* oter le plaisir que Ton prend a ces

sortes de
choses'. Why not be content with that?
Nor can it be urged that critics are much
more reliable
(if we seek any absolute truth) in their
particular than
in their general judgements. It might have
been thought
that, however weak their theories of what
makes litera-
ture good, they would at least have an
intuition for good
literature when they saw it; as a man may be
a master of
billiards without understanding dynamics,
or a judge of